NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

WETLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

(acre)

CODE 644

DEFINITION

Retaining, developing, or managing habitat for wetland wildlife.

PURPOSE

To maintain, develop, or improve habitat for migratory birds, fur-bearers, or other wetland associated flora and fauna.

Provide a variety of natural foods for the desired kinds of wildlife species.

Provide a variety of cover types for the desired kinds of wildlife, such as nesting, loafing, resting, thermal, and escape cover.

Arrange habitat elements in proper amounts and location to benefit desired species.

Manage the wildlife habitats to achieve a viable wildlife population within the species home range.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On or adjacent to wetlands, rivers, lakes and other water bodies where wetland associated wildlife habitat can be managed. This practice applies to natural wetlands and water bodies as well as wetlands that may have been previously restored (657), enhanced (659), and/or created (658).

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to all Purposes Named Above

Identify wildlife species management goals and objectives. The objectives may include:

1. To provide for the habitat requirements of specific species.
2. To provide diverse habitats of a certain quality.

Identify the type, amount, and distribution of habitat elements and the management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives for the desired species of wildlife.

Native plants will be used wherever possible.

The landowner shall obtain all necessary local, State and Federal permits that apply to practice installation, operation, and maintenance.

Planning for this practice shall be based on a wildlife habitat appraisal or suitable habitat evaluation. The appraisal or evaluation procedure shall be used to consider individual fields, home range areas, habitat type, or an entire property or operating unit.

Habitat Appraisal or Habitat Evaluation:

Wildlife habitat evaluations will be done using any of the following:

- USFWS Habitat Evaluation Procedure Models (HEP)
- NRCS or other formally developed species specific models
- NRCS State developed wildlife habitat appraisal guide
- Minimum habitat requirements outlined by species below under “Habitat Requirements”
- Wildlife habitat Quality Criteria contained in FOTG Section III

The habitat evaluation will result in a quality rating or habitat suitability index (HSI) that considers the type, amount, and distribution of habitat elements required for the desired species of wildlife. The quality rating or HIS will be compared to quality criteria in Section III of the FOTG. If the evaluation indicates a level below the acceptable quality, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary changes in habitat elements or their management to improve the rating to the minimal acceptable level or above.

NRCS, ND
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If the evaluation is at the minimum or above, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary management to preserve, maintain or improve the existing habitat.

Development and Management of Wildlife Habitat:

As indicated by the wildlife habitat evaluation, certain habitat elements may be weak or missing. For the desired species, identify the types, amount, and distribution of habitat elements and management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.

The amount and kinds of habitat elements planned and their location and management shall be identified in a management plan.

Vegetative manipulations to restore plant and/or animal diversity may be accomplished by prescribed burning, mechanical, biological, or chemical methods, or a combination of the four.

Grazing or haying shall be managed to maintain or improve vegetation for the desired species of wildlife and will avoid periods when wildlife are nesting, fawning, etc.

Management measures shall be provided to control invasive species and/or noxious weeds.

Spraying or clipping of noxious weeds shall be done on a “spot” basis whenever possible.

Biological control of undesirable plant or animal species shall be implemented where feasible.

CONSIDERATIONS

Habitat Requirements

The following habitat requirements will be considered when assessing wildlife habitat. Not all may apply to every habitat type or species.

1. Food
    a. Type
    b. Amount
    c. Seasonal availability
2. Cover
    a. Type
    b. Amount
    c. Seasonal availability
3. Water
    a. Quality
    b. Quantity
    c. Accessibility
    d. Seasonal availability
4. Interspersion and Distance to:
    a. Crops
    b. Grasses and/or legumes
    c. Shrubs
    d. Trees
    e. Water
    f. Openings
5. Migration
    a. Routes
    b. Season of use
    c. Corridors

Consider that manipulation of habitat may impact more than the desired species of wildlifeduring the planning process.

This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

Consider the existence of habitat fragmentation for species requiring large blocks of habitat.

Consider habitat linkages and habitat corridors.

Consider the use of native plant material whenever possible.

Consider effects of hazardous materials - expected or known to occur on the site - on wildlife or human use related to wildlife.

Consider effects of management actions on compliance with state and federal hunting regulation (e.g., baiting).

Consider effects of management on non-target fish and wildlife species and Threatened and Endangered Species.

Consider effects of livestock grazing on runoff, infiltration, and wetland vegetation.

Consider using artificial nesting structures that are designed for the region.

Consider the impact of increased wildlife use on adjacent lands (e.g., crop depredation).

Consider the effect of volumes and rates of water runoff, infiltration, evaporation, and transpiration on the local water budget.

Consider effects on other water uses or users downstream or in a common aquifer of the planned practice.

Consider adjacent wetlands or water bodies that contribute to wetland system complexity and diversity.

Consider establishing vegetative buffers to reduce sediment and sediment-attached pollutants from entering the wetland.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Document how habitat needs for the desired kinds of wildlife will be provided, including: required depth of water during different seasons; types and sizes of structures required; desired plant species and the means of establishing and maintaining them.

Specific information may be provided using appropriate job sheets or written documentation in the conservation plan.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The purpose of operation, maintenance, and management is to insure that the practice functions as intended over time. Total non-use of the area is not considered sound management.

A plan for operation and maintenance shall include monitoring and management of structural and vegetative measures.

Appropriate burning, haying, or livestock grazing plans will be developed to address the establishment, development, and management of wetland and associated upland vegetation for the intended purpose.

Biological control of undesirable plant species and pests (e.g., using predator or parasitic species) shall be implemented where feasible.